



## The Nature of Wisdom

Our guest author Bruce W. Heinemann is a fine art landscape photographer, writer, publisher, and speaker. He has photographed and published fine art landscape prints, calendars, and books. His award-winning music video, based on his coffee table book, *The Art of Nature: Reflections on the Grand Design*, was narrated by Emmy-winning actor Tom Skerritt and syndicated for broadcast to nearly 150 PBS stations around the country. He received the Virginia Merrill Bloedel Award for his contributions to the welfare of nature. Bruce resides in the San Juan Islands of Washington State and continues to explore and photograph the beauty and mystery of nature.

Late July was my favorite time of year in the Palouse Hills of southeastern Washington State, one of the country's most fertile and productive wheat-growing regions. After dusty, hot days chucking hay bales ten-high onto my uncle's flatbed trailer, my cousin and I would clean up and rush to the dinner table to enjoy a wonderful farm-fresh meal, with almost everything sourced from the garden, henhouse, or barnyard.

After we excused ourselves from dinner, we would hop on our motorcycles and head up the back roads to Cougar Hill, which rose above the fields west of the farm. At the top, we parked facing northeast toward Spokane. We basked in the fragrant, dusty warmth of the evening harvest sun and gazed across the golden quilt of wheat fields spreading into the distance. Columns of dust and grain chaff rose skyward from the monstrous combines creeping along the hillsides, looking like giant alien ants. I remember how beautifully unreal the landscape seemed: earthly form, sunlight, and human activity became one in this visual masterpiece, this living painting.

In that time and place, I was immersed in the unspeakable beauty of a landscape rich and abundant with the sustenance of earth's bounty, nourishing both my soul and physical being. There, I began a lifelong quest to explore, through the art of photography, the rich and complex relationship between humankind and the natural world that inspires and nurtures us. Indeed, the purpose of my exploration was to better understand and share, through my art, an appreciation and understanding of the confluence of nature's fundamental ecological processes and our human need to sustain ourselves.

As an extension of that exploratory journey, I earned a Bachelor of Science in anthropology, hoping to understand better how cultures historically adapted to their unique sustaining environments and physical evolution, and to further investigate the stories of civilizations long past, told through an examination of their ruins.

Those stories are as varied as they are revealing. The cultures that flourished did so because they lived in relative harmony, or in a state of apparent symbiosis (mutual benefit) with the flora, fauna, and ecosystems of which they were an inextricable part.

I thought that perhaps by possessing this knowledge, I could better appreciate the dynamics of adaptation in our modern world. We have adapted through the use of energy from fossil fuels, in opposition to the solar-based current energy income employed by all other creatures on our planet. Our cultural adaptation precludes the symbiosis and harmony that successful cultures of the past have employed. We no longer see ourselves as part of a bigger picture.

This deeper understanding of how we may live sustainably in this world guided me as I embarked upon a career in nature photography. Along the way, I studied the musings of many great writers and thought leaders, current and historical. I have always found the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson to be particularly insightful and profound, but perhaps no statement of the fundamental relatedness of humans to all things was better expressed than by Chief Seattle in his famous quote:



"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect."

As my career progressed in the years to follow, my work was not only guided by the diverse beauty of the landscapes I traveled to and photographed, but by a larger realization of our deep and inseparable connection to the landscape. My first book, *The Art of Nature: Reflections on the Grand Design*, published in 1992, asks, "What does the beauty of nature have to tell us about living with her in a whole and sustainable way?"

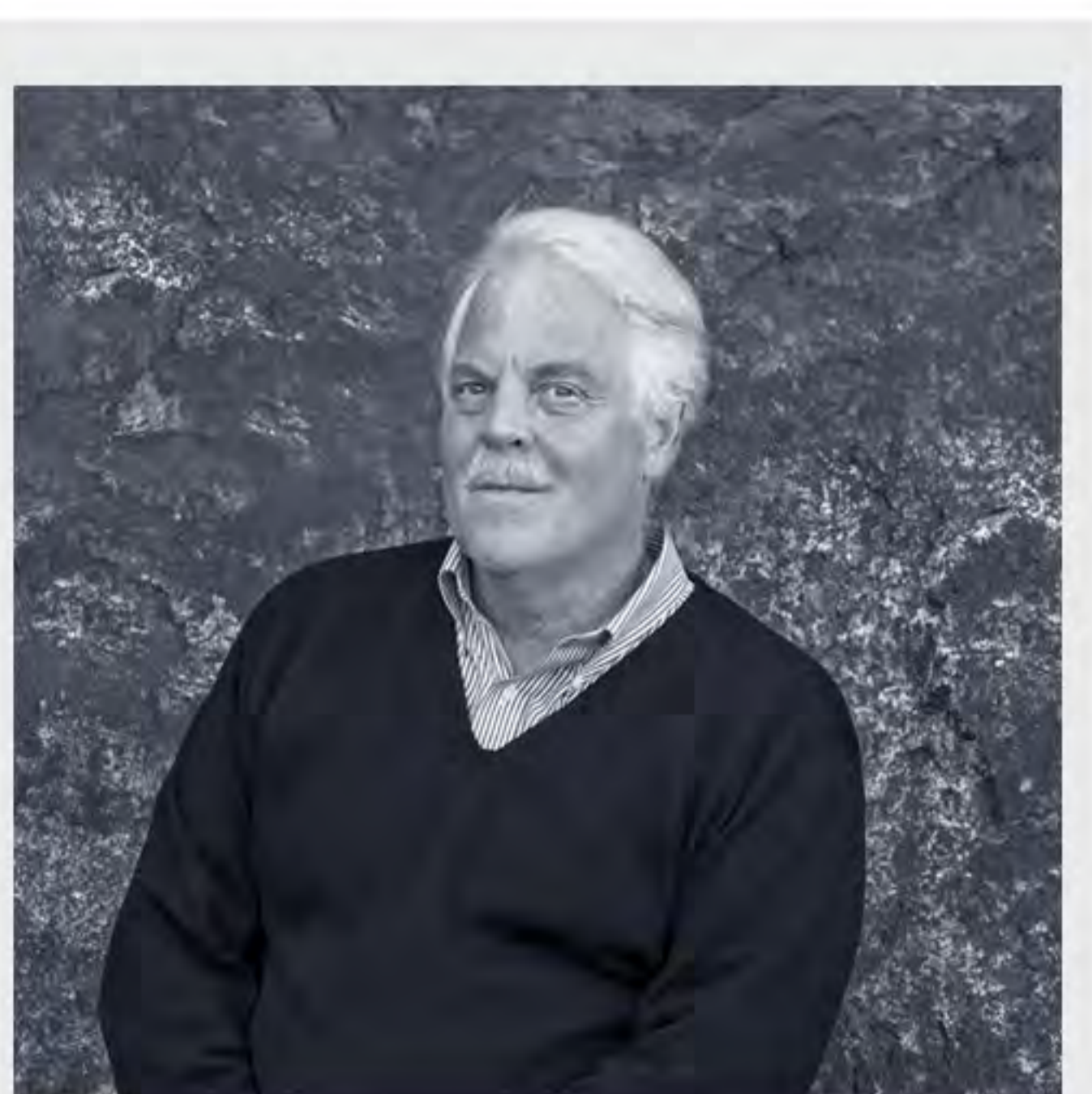
In the introduction, my co-author Tim McNulty observes:



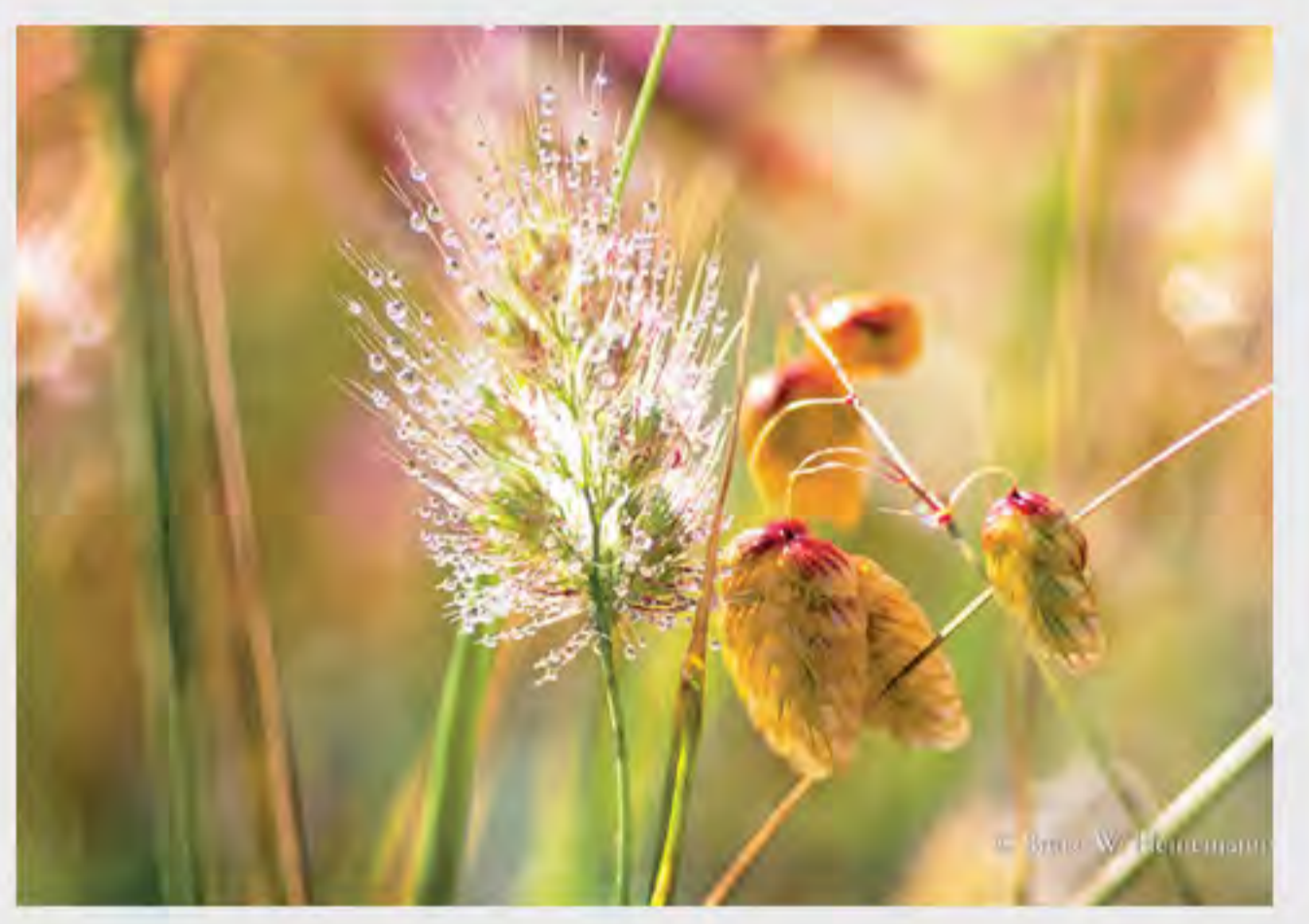
"The wisdom of nature speaks to us heart to heart, and nature's first language is beauty. Complexity, richness, diversity...these also to be sure, but they are articulations of the intellect. Beauty remains the language of the heart, and each of us perceives it in a slightly different way."

Through actively witnessing beauty in nature, I have cultivated the recognition of oneness that wells up from a source deeper than language. What inevitably follows from this witnessing is the establishment of a values and ethics system that guides our actions if we and our earth will abide. As such, beauty elicits and deepens a soulful, primal bond: one that both inspires and informs our relationship with the earth that sustains us.

My love affair with the beauty of nature is stronger than ever. In the days and years ahead, I hope to continue to give back to the natural world even a fraction of the blessing it has bestowed upon me throughout my lifetime.



Bruce W. Heinemann



*Rattlesnake Grass*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



*Dancing in the Light*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



*Magnolia Leaves*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



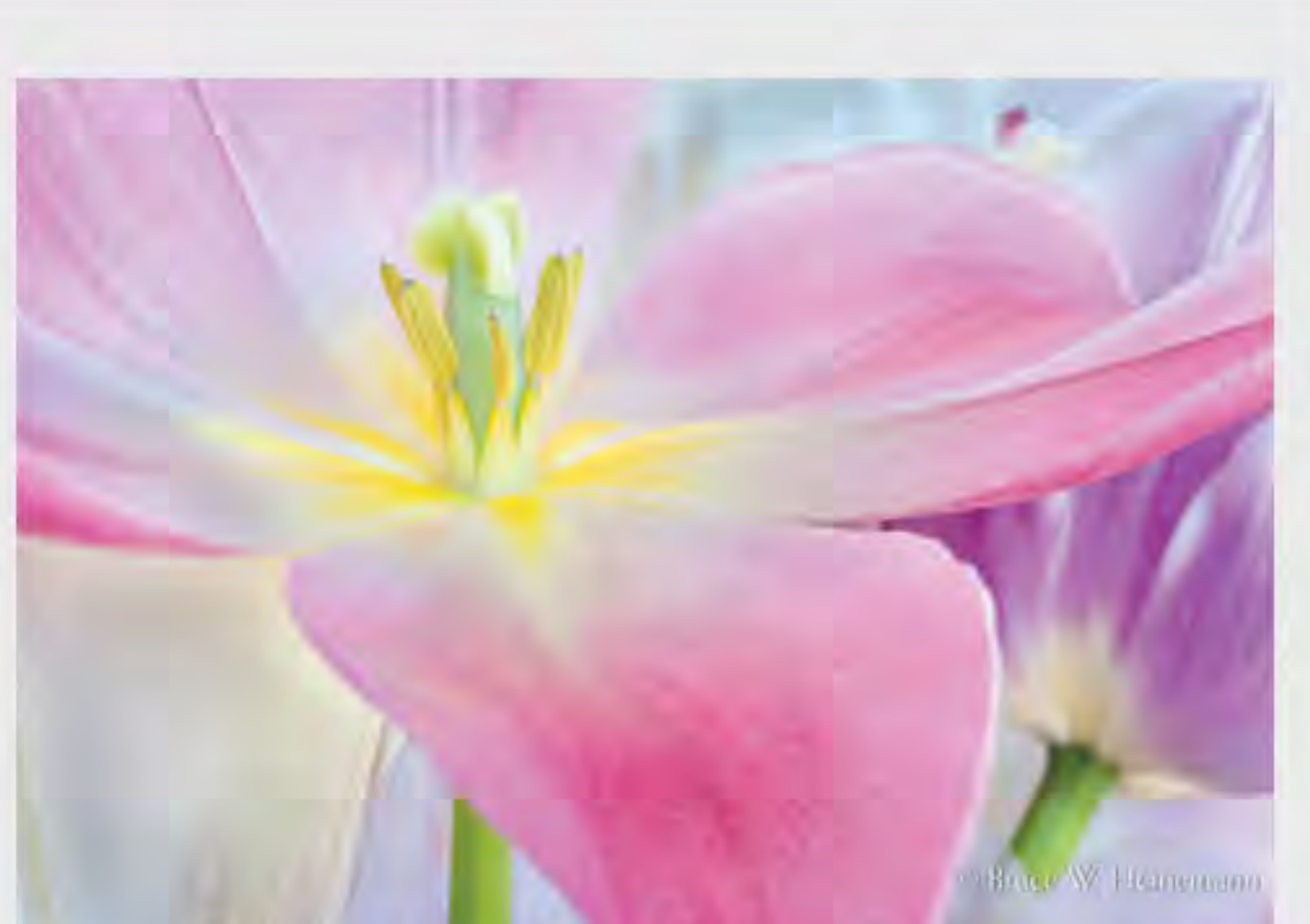
*Sierra Nevada Predawn*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



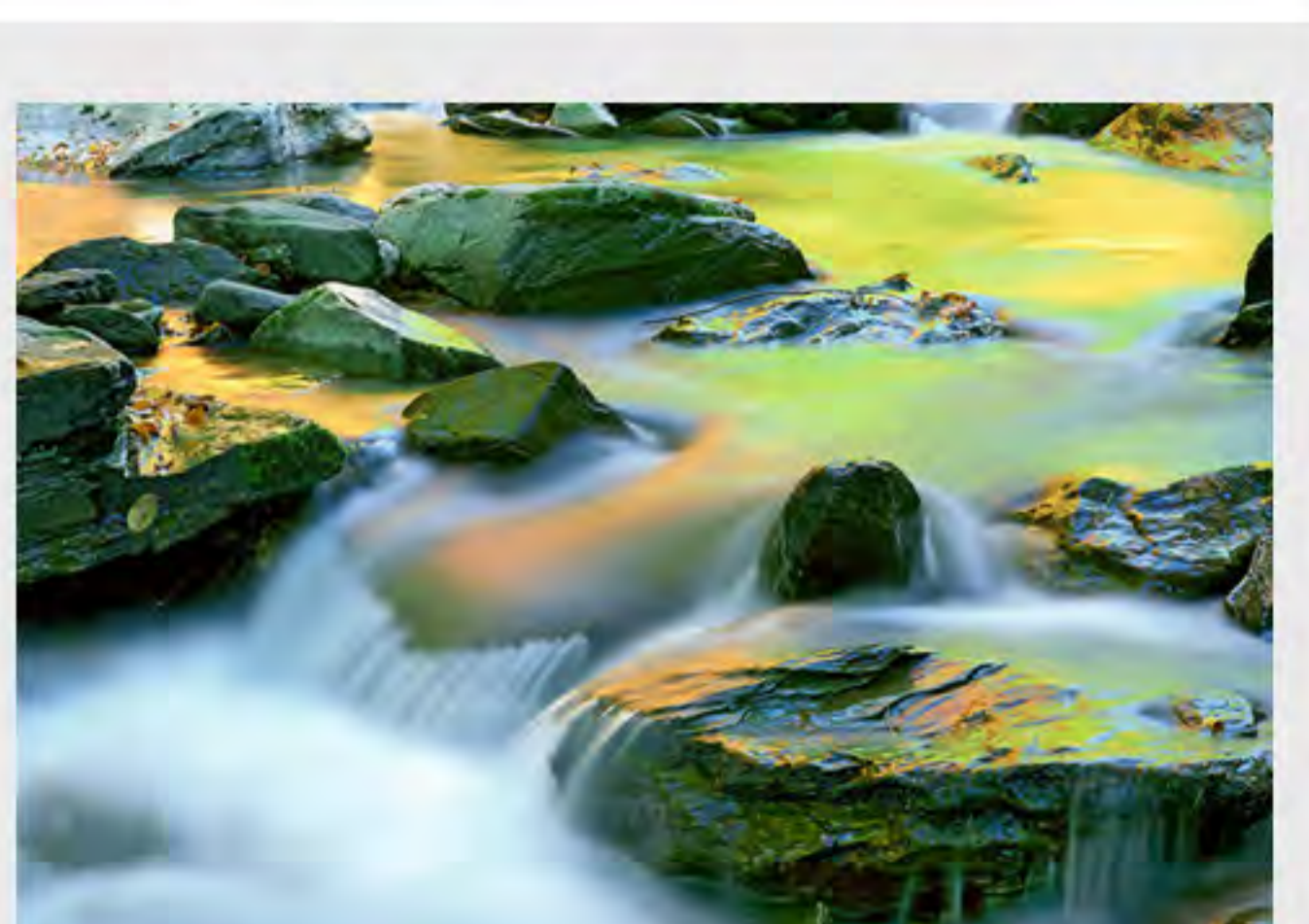
*Wild Poppy Design*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



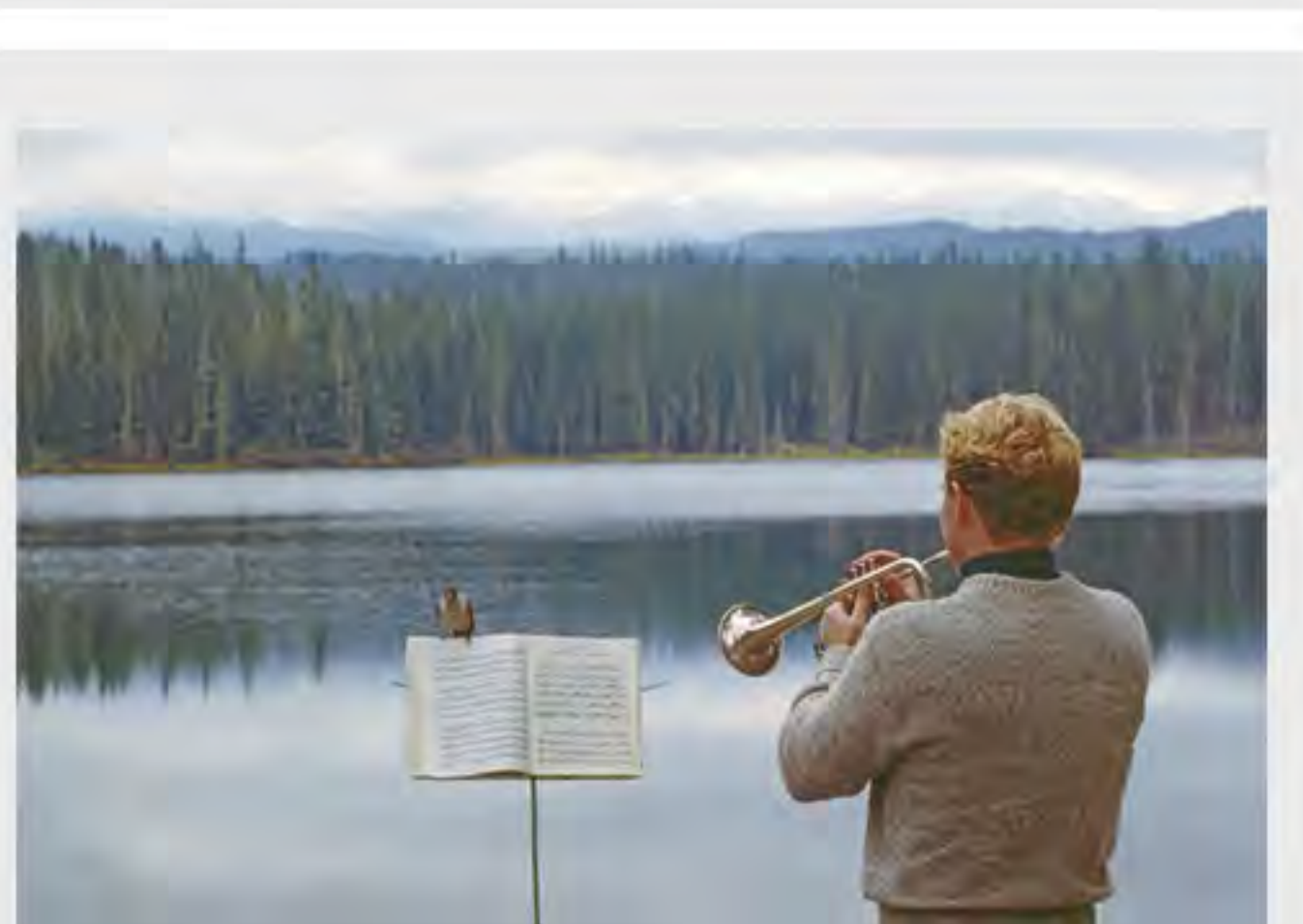
*Migration of the Monoliths*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



*Tulip*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



*Bash Bish Falls*  
© Bruce W. Heinemann



Bruce W. Heinemann serenading a Grey Jay

By Bruce Heinemann

**N2Nature**

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